

Wasatch County citizens of tourism increases a

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HEBER CITY — Some 7,000 housing units, including single dwelling, condominiums and hotel rooms, have been proposed for the Jordanelle area in Wasatch County, where there are now only about 3,500 units.

With the new construction will come more jobs and sales of construction materials as well as property taxes. And since most of the growth will be related to recreation, vast numbers of new commercial opportunities are being projected. No one in Wasatch County has any doubts that the local economy is destined to grow.

But the inevitable changes the county must prepare for are only starting to become evident. Studies for a new master plan already have begun. But complicated issues must be settled before the plan can become final, like steep mountainsides, water quality, wetlands, wildlife, accessibility for emergency equipment in remote areas, water sources, sewage treatment. The process is further complicated by questions about how much development and what kind can be allowed without destroying the rural mountain atmosphere.

Wasatch County's population increased by 2 percent from 1988 to 1989, the fourth highest rate in the state. And with all the growth and development that is beginning and being planned, the county planner, Bob Mathis, is one of the busiest people in the county.

The State Population Estimates Committee has projected growth in the county to continue at 2 percent per year, which Mathis considers conservative because of what is proposed for Jordanelle. Even at that rate, the population will grow from 10,300 in 1990 to 12,000 in ten years, but he estimates the growth rate will be more like five to six percent a year.

He said in 1970 the population was less than 6,000 and, before that, the population hadn't varied by more than 200 people since 1930.

Mathis describes the county as being in transition and becoming a place where people can live without having local jobs. He points out that the local economy has traditionally thrived on a base of agriculture, mining, and commerce in which family farms and businesses produced significant incomes.

But Mathis says the changes appear to be setting up a clash between the people who are concerned about the economy of the Heber Valley and want to promote local commerce, and the urban people who are moving in because of its rural atmosphere which they



Bob Mathis

want to preserve.

He says that conflict presents some serious challenges as the county works on its new master plan and that there are no easy compromises that can satisfy both sides. But a successful economic future based on tourism cannot succeed if the things that are unique about the valley are destroyed, he says.

Because of the prospect of the growth, and the increase in tourism and recreation that is already beginning, business owners in the county have held on through almost a decade of economic hard times.

When construction on the Jordanelle Dam, six miles north of Heber City, began in June 1987 and the additional recreational opportunities that would be opened up because of the new reservoir became evident, the Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce and some of the local businesses began to gear up for a tourism economy.

The Heber Valley also may become a bedroom community for people who work in Utah or Salt Lake Counties, once U.S. 40 is widened to a 55 mph four-lane highway all the way to 1-15 and U.S. 189 through Provo Canyon is upgraded to a 50 mph four-lane highway, significantly reducing the time it will take to travel from the valley to the Wasatch Front. But Mathis hopes the Heber Valley won't just become an ordinary subdivision of communities on the Wasatch Front.

Although the growth has just barely begun and the number of visiting tourists and recreationists has not increased significantly yet, the local economy is showing an upturn from three years ago when it was officially described as depressed. The consensus of opinion

growing beets provided ready cash. While construction was in progress 460 farmers, mostly in the Le area, had already planted 1,800 acres of beets after being convinced by factory representative that they could earn \$45 an acre much better than other crops.

By the fall of 1891, construction was complete and beets were ready to harvest and the first campaign was under way for the new factory. The first run on lasted 58 days, but 10,000 tons



An estimated 270 building permits were issued throughout the county, including the cities, during 1990. Of those, about 32 were for primary single family residences and 30 were for cabins. In 1989 there were only about 167 total permits issued, including about 30 primary residences and 25 cabins. The average building costs both years were \$90,000 for primary residences and \$51,500 for cabins.

Job Service figures also indicate improvement in the county's economy during the past several years and the director of the Heber City office, Carol Bonner, agrees with those who are optimistic that the county is entering into an era of economic health.

The average unemployment rate last year averaged 6.9 percent compared to 10.6 percent in 1980.

But Bonner attributes the increase in employment to growth in Park City rather than in Wasatch County because probably a good percent of the Park City work force comes from Wasatch County. There are many cases in which people with jobs in Park City have moved into the Heber Valley because they can't afford to live in Park City, as well as local residents who find jobs in Park City.

Job Service figures show construction employment in the county dropped from 17 percent in 1980 to 10 percent in 1990, but construction planned in the county can be expected to open up many more construction jobs.

Bonner said a lot of people have moved into the Heber Valley because of union jobs on the Jordanelle Dam.

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Planners get help from new software

Robert Rice
Salt News staff writer

Not since the advent of the scale model has anything lent itself so readily to urban planning as does a computer program that lets architects look into Salt Lake City's future.

Developed by ASSIST, a non-profit architectural design agency, and the University of Utah, the program creates computer graphic drawings of every street, alley, building and window sill in a 40-block down-



PHOTOGRAPHY/RAVELL
Tony Serrato explains a computer program that helps city planners avoid expensive mistakes.



Wasatch County Commissioners and Heber City citizens examine a map showing Heber City's proposed Sphere of Annexation boundaries, after which they voiced their objections, during a public hearing last week.